



Town of Groton, Connecticut

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Town Clerk 860-441-6640
Town Manager
860-441-6630

Meeting Minutes

Town Council

Mayor James L. Streeter, Councilors Bruce S. Flax, Bill Johnson, Catherine Kolnaski, Deborah B. Monteiro, Frank O'Beirne, Jr., Deborah L. Peruzzotti, Paulann H. Sheets, and Harry A. Watson

Tuesday, October 5, 2010

7:30 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING

I. ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 7:31 p.m. by Mayor Streeter.

Members Present: Mayor Streeter, Councilor Flax, Councilor Johnson, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Monteiro, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Peruzzotti and Councilor Sheets

Members Absent: Councilor Watson

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher and Office Assistant Lori Watrous.

II. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The Salute to the Flag was led by Wendy Eckholm.

III. RECOGNITION, AWARDS & MEMORIALS

None.

IV. RECEIPT OF CITIZENS' PETITIONS, COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

John Sutherland, 32 Neptune Drive, is in support of expediting the town-wide assessment of Police Departments in Groton. He stated that the Town Charter is clear that the responsibility for budget appropriations is a duty of the RTM, and Mr. Sutherland believes that the Council's attempt to restore cuts previously made by the RTM is contrary to the Charter.

Wendy Eckholm, 165 Benham Road, stated that when the Groton Animal Shelter was built, the facility went from 25 runs down to 18. Recently, there have been discussions between Groton and New London regarding regionalization, and Ms. Eckholm does not think that the Groton facility will be large enough to accommodate New London's animals.

Mark Comeau, 47 Trumbull Avenue, Stonington, Chairman of the Stonington Design Review Board, is concerned by the conduct of the Historic District Commission. As a local architect, Mr. Comeau is uncertain of commission members' qualifications and is disturbed by their lack of professionalism. Mr. Comeau stated that there is no measurable rubric for design, and urged the Council to investigate.

V. RESPONSES TO CITIZENS' PETITIONS, COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

The Town Manager stated that information has been shared between Groton and New London regarding the animal shelter facility, and that this item will be on the next Committee of the Whole agenda.

Due to the numerous complaints, Councilor Monteiro suggested a meeting with the Historic District Commission (HDC).

Councilor Sheets asked whether HDC meetings are recorded, and Councilor O'Beirne replied that they are, but in the past some of the tapes have been unintelligible.

The Town Manager noted that the same equipment is used to tape over 150 other meetings each year, and there have been only one or two instances when tapes were unclear. These instances were probably attributable to bad tapes or operator error.

By consensus, it was decided that Mayor Streeter and two other councilors will meet with the Chairman of the Historic District Commission.

VI. CONSENT CALENDAR

a. Approval of Minutes

2010-0208 Approval of Minutes (Town Council)

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the Town Council meeting of September 21, 2010 are hereby accepted and approved.

This Matter was Adopted on the Consent Calendar.

b. Administrative Items

2010-0200 Special Trust Fund Contributions

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING CONTRIBUTIONS TO SPECIAL TRUST FUNDS

RESOLVED, that the Town Council hereby accepts contributions to the Town as follows:

Mr. and Mrs. Ludwig Fuisting - \$30.00 - Library Discretionary

Jason Deeble - \$50.00 - Library Discretionary

This Matter was Adopted on the Consent Calendar.

c. Deletions from the Town Council Referral List

2009-0153 Reports on Activities in Groton

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - No further action on the Consent Calendar.

2009-0312 Communicating with Groton Citizens

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - No further action on the Consent Calendar.

2010-0195 Groton Long Point Police Budget - Request for Supplemental Appropriation

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

2010-0197 Hybrid Vehicle Grant

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

2010-0198 Groton Education Foundation Grant - Senior Center

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

2010-0203 Appointment of Susan Marquardt as a Regular Member of the Zoning Commission

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

2010-0204 Appointment of Ellen Chiapperini to the Library Board

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

2010-0205 Reappointment of David Williams to Water Pollution Control Authority

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

2010-0206 Reappointment of Laura Bradley to Fair Rent Commission

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

2010-0207 Reappointment of Thomas Skrmetti to Harbor Management Commission

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

Passed The Consent Calendar

Calendar, including all the preceding items marked as having been adopted on the Consent Calendar.

The motion carried unanimously

VII. COMMUNICATION REPORTS (Other than Committee Reports)

a. Town Councilors

Councilors received emails regarding a supplemental appropriation for the Groton Long Point Police Department, the Historic District Commission, and the Town's application to become a public access provider.

Councilor Kolnaski attended the Groton Adolescent Substance Abuse Prevention (GASP) Family Day and a Senior Center Computer Coordinating Council meeting.

Councilor Kolnaski and Mayor Streeter attended a Children First Groton meeting.

Councilor Flax noted that "Annie" will be performed at the Senior Center from October 21-30, 2010.

Councilor O'Beirne reminded Councilors that the Groton Open Space Association (GOSA) versus Town of Groton Inland Wetlands and Zoning Commissions court case will begin October 26, 2010, regarding decisions and permits for Mystic Woods, a proposed subdivision.

Councilor Sheets attended a Task Force on Climate Change and Sustainable Community meeting.

Councilor Johnson attended an Economic Development Commission meeting and a Golf Advisory Board meeting. He also met with the Ropers, who sent an email to the Council regarding the Town's application to become a public access provider.

Mayor Streeter participated in the cleanup of Drozdyk Drive through the Adopt-A-Highway program. He attended the Avery-Copp Museum First Annual Fundraising Gala, the "In the Pink" art show, a subcommittee meeting for the Thames Street Review Committee, the CorePlus Federal Credit Union 20th Anniversary Celebration, the initial Town-Wide Police Assessment meeting, a community car show in Navy housing, and the Noank Fire Department's open house.

b. Clerk of the Representative Town Meeting

The next regular meeting of the RTM will be October 13, 2010, at the Groton Senior Center.

c. Clerk of the Council

Betsy Moukawsher stated that the Town Clerk's office has been a very busy place due to processing absentee ballot requests and marriage licenses. October has more marriages than any other month.

d. Town Manager

The Town Manager noted that there will be a Military Appreciation Breakfast on November 9, 2010, a public information session about River Road on October 6, 2010, Groton Fall Festival on October 9, 2010, Colonial Heritage Days at the Jabez Smith House on October 9-10, 2010, and the ground-breaking ceremony for the Mystic Streetscape Project on October 14, 2010. He announced that the Town has received a grant for approximately \$36,000 to install video upgrades at the Town Hall Annex. The Town Manager stated that all Town offices will be closed on October 11, 2010, for Columbus Day.

e. Town Attorney

No report.

VIII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Community & Cultural Development - Chairman Peruzzotti

Councilor Peruzzotti read the minutes of the meeting held on September 28, 2010, which are on file in the Town Clerk's Office.

b. Economic Development - Chairman Johnson

No meeting, no report.

c. Education/Health & Social Services - Chairman Kolnaski

No meeting, no report.

d. Environment/Energy - Chairman Sheets

No meeting, no report.

e. Finance - Chairman O'Beirne

No meeting, no report.

f. Personnel/Appointments/Rules - Chairman Flax

Councilor Flax read the minutes of the meeting held on September 28, 2010, which are on file in the Town Clerk's Office.

g. Public Safety - Chairman Monteiro

No meeting, no report.

h. Public Works/Recreation - Chairman Watson

No meeting, no report.

i. Committee of the Whole - Mayor Streeter

Mayor Streeter stated that the resolutions on tonight's agenda are a result of the last regular Committee of the Whole meeting.

IX. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

X. NEW BUSINESS

2010-0195 Groton Long Point Police Budget - Request for Supplemental Appropriation

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING A TRANSFER FROM CONTINGENCY FOR THE GROTON LONG POINT POLICE DEPARTMENT

WHEREAS, during its deliberations on the FYE 2011 budget the Representative Town Meeting voted to reduce Groton Long Point's police budget by \$208,000, and

WHEREAS, the Groton Long Point Board subsequently voted to reduce its public safety budget by \$80,000 and pay the remaining \$128,000 through an increase in the district's mill rate, and

WHEREAS, prior to this decision, the president of the Groton Long Point Board had requested supplemental funding from the Town of Groton in the amount of \$128,000, and

WHEREAS, the Town Council has authorized a Town-wide police assessment in an effort to bring Groton Long Point, City of Groton, and Town of Groton representatives to the table to discuss police services, and

WHEREAS, the Town Council felt that Groton Long Point's request for supplemental funding should be addressed separately from the Town-wide police assessment, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that a transfer of \$128,000 be made from the FYE 2011 General Fund's Contingency account (#10741-5499) to Groton Long Point's police account (#10910-5230).

Refer to RTM.

A motion was made by Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., seconded by Councilor Sheets, that this matter be Adopted as Amended and Referred to the Representative Town Meeting.

Councilor O'Beirne stated that there has been some confusion, but the source of money for this resolution should either be a supplemental appropriation from the General Fund balance or a transfer from the Contingency account.

Councilor Peruzzotti will be voting against this resolution, as she believes that this matter does not need to be addressed immediately.

Councilor Johnson stated that it is a matter of fairness.

The Town Manager explained the difference between the General Fund balance and Contingency and noted that the current General Fund balance is 7.2%, which is below the 7.5% guideline that the Council adopted. The Town Manager's suggestion is to utilize the Contingency Fund. Regardless of the funding source, if adopted, this item will proceed to the RTM.

Councilor Sheets noted that the cut to Groton Long Point's Police Department budget was done without planning or preparation, and stated that this is a matter of principle.

Councilor Flax will be voting against this resolution because he believes that the political process was followed. He is afraid that passing this resolution will open a "can of worms" where budgetary matters are concerned.

Councilor Monteiro stated that she would agree with Councilor Flax if the RTM was removed from the process altogether, but, if passed, this resolution will be referred to the RTM.

In answer to a query, the Town Manager replied that he does not think bond ratings will be affected if the General Fund is used.

Councilor Johnson remarked that Groton Long Point residents are taxpayers and the Town Police do not patrol there. He believes that this appropriation is equivalent to the cost for the Town to police that area.

Mayor Streeter stated that this resolution does not usurp the authority of the RTM because, if passed, the resolution will be referred to the RTM. He is, however, disappointed that the town-wide police assessment was not completed before this resolution came to a vote.

MOTION TO AMEND to replace the entire resolution with a new one previously prepared by the Town Manager that stipulates the funding source as a transfer from the General Fund's Contingency account was made by Councilor O'Beirne, seconded by Councilor Sheets.

VOTE on Motion to Amend passed 6 In Favor, 2 Opposed (Opposed: Councilors Flax and Peruzzotti).

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 6 - Mayor Streeter, Councilor Johnson, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Monteiro, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr. and Councilor Sheets
Opposed: 2 - Councilor Flax and Councilor Peruzzotti

2010-0197

Hybrid Vehicle Grant

RESOLUTION TO ACCEPT A GRANT FOR THE PURCHASE OF HYBRID VEHICLES

WHEREAS, the Connecticut Department of Transportation (DOT) administers a grant program designed to aid municipalities in defraying the cost of purchasing hybrid motor vehicles, and

WHEREAS, fleet management policies would call for the replacement of two town vehicles that will be more than ten years old in FY 2012, and

WHEREAS, Groton's eligibility to receive grant funding for use in FY 2012 requires the Town to submit a Grant Program Confirmation to Connecticut DOT, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that Town Manager Mark R. Oefinger may enter into and sign the 2010 Connecticut Clean Fuel Program Agreement with the Connecticut Department of Transportation for a cash grant toward the purchase of two alternative fuel motor vehicles.

A motion was made by Councilor Johnson, seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously

2010-0198 Groton Education Foundation Grant - Senior Center

GROTON EDUCATION FOUNDATION GRANT - SENIOR CENTER

WHEREAS, the Groton Educational Foundation provides "mini-grants" to fund unique projects based on ideas from teachers or other educators in Groton, and

WHEREAS, the Groton Senior Center and Claude Chester Elementary School annually engage students and seniors in mutual educational experiences, and

WHEREAS, grant funds could be used for an intergenerational program called "Reading Hand in Hand," now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that Town Manager Mark R. Oefinger or his designee may apply for a grant of \$1,018.80 from the Groton Educational Foundation.

A motion was made by Councilor Monteiro, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously

2010-0203 Appointment of Susan Marquardt as a Regular Member of the Zoning Commission

RESOLUTION APPOINTING SUSAN MARQUARDT AS A REGULAR MEMBER OF THE ZONING COMMISSION

RESOLVED, that Susan Marquardt, 177 Great Brook Road, is hereby appointed as a regular member (from an alternate member) of the Zoning Commission for a term ending 12/31/11.

A motion was made by Councilor Peruzzotti, seconded by Councilor Flax, that this matter be Adopted.

Councilor Sheets noted that there were two outstanding candidates for this vacancy, but Ms. Marquardt had served as an alternate on the Zoning Commission for a longer time.

The motion carried unanimously

2010-0204 Appointment of Ellen Chiapperini to the Library Board

RESOLUTION APPOINTING ELLEN CHIAPPERINI TO THE LIBRARY BOARD

RESOLVED, that Ellen Chiapperini, 150 Library Street, Mystic, is hereby appointed to the Library Board for a term ending 12/31/11.

A motion was made by Mayor Streeter, seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti, that this matter be Postponed Indefinitely.

It was noted that there is no vacancy on the Library Board at this time.

The motion carried unanimously

2010-0205 Reappointment of David Williams to Water Pollution Control Authority

CONTROL AUTHORITY

RESOLVED, that David G. Williams, 129 Elm Street, Noank is hereby reappointed to the Water Pollution Control Authority for a term ending 5/24/13.

A motion was made by Councilor Flax, seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously

2010-0206 Reappointment of Laura Bradley to Fair Rent Commission

REAPPOINTMENT OF LAURA BRADLEY TO THE FAIR RENT COMMISSION

RESOLVED, that Laura M. Bradley, 38 Round Hill Road, is hereby reappointed to the Fair Rent Commission for a term expiring 7/1/13.

A motion was made by Councilor Sheets, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously

2010-0207 Reappointment of Thomas Skrmetti to Harbor Management Commission

RESOLUTION REAPPOINTING THOMAS SKRMETTI AS AN ALTERNATE MEMBER TO THE HARBOR MANAGEMENT COMMISSION

RESOLVED, that Thomas Skrmetti, 71 Lapstrake Court, Mystic is hereby reappointed as an alternate member to the Harbor Management Commission, for a term ending 09/01/13.

A motion was made by Councilor Peruzzotti, seconded by Councilor Sheets, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously

XI. OTHER BUSINESS**2010-0210 New London's Request to Use Groton Animal Shelter**

NEW LONDON'S REQUEST TO USE GROTON ANIMAL SHELTER

Mayor Streeter requested a referral to the Committee of the Whole to discuss New London's request for access to the Groton Animal Shelter.

Councilor Kolnaski stated that there will be a Groton Heights School Reuse Committee meeting on October 18, 2010.

Councilor Sheets asked if there is time to have a public hearing regarding the Town's application to the State of Connecticut Department of Public Utility Control (DPUC) to become a public access provider.

The Town Manager remarked that it is difficult to address some things in under five minutes, but public hearings have certain requirements. He stated that the Ropers could be asked to attend a Committee of the Whole meeting.

Councilor Johnson mentioned that the resolution to apply to the DPUC was discussed at a special Committee of the Whole meeting just prior to the regular Town Council meeting at which it was adopted. He feels that citizens were not afforded ample opportunity to voice their opinions because the Council acted on the resolution the same night that it was introduced.

Mayor Streeter requested that time be allotted at the next Committee of the Whole meeting so that the Ropers and other interested parties can voice their opinions on the Town's application to the DPUC.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn at 9:01 was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor Flax and so voted unanimously.

Attest:

*Betsy Moukawsher, Town Clerk
Clerk of the Council*

Lori Watrous, Office Assistant